

*LENT,  
HOLY WEEK &  
EASTER ACTIVITY  
PACK*

**FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**



**CHURCH  
PUBLISHING  
INCORPORATED**

## **Lent, Holy Week, and Easter Activity Pack**

A compilation of activities from the following resources:

[\*Faithful Celebrations: Making Time for God from Mardi Gras Through Pentecost\*](#)

Sharon Ely Pearson

[\*Building Faith Brick by Brick: An Imaginative Way to Explore the Bible with Children\*](#)

Emily Slichter Given

[\*What We Do in Lent: A Child's Activity Book\*](#)

Anne E. Kitch, Illustrations by Dorothy Thompson Perez

[\*Faith at Home: A Handbook for Cautiously Christian Parents\*](#)

Wendy Claire Barrie

[\*Drawn to the Gospels: An Illustrated Lectionary \(Year B\)\*](#)

Jay Sidebotham



## **Lent**

### ***Shrove Tuesday***

Better known as Mardi Gras or Fat Tuesday, Shrove Tuesday is the day before Lent begins. In the Middle Ages, people used up all the fat in the house—butter, milk, eggs, meat—on the night before Lent began so that they could come closer to God by giving up these foods as they prepared for the great feast of Easter. Pancakes are traditional in England for this, so Episcopalians often have breakfast for dinner, while those celebrating Mardi Gras are likely eating gumbo and Kings' Cake. What kings, you ask? The Magi—the ones who brought gifts to the holy child at Epiphany.

### **Ash Wednesday**

Ash Wednesday is not a day many people take their children to church, since these are the words we hear when we receive the cross of ashes on our foreheads: “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”<sup>2</sup> The cross of oil given to us in the same place at our baptism is made with the words (in the Episcopal Church), “You are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ’s own forever.”<sup>3</sup> We can’t hide from our children that being human means that one day we will die, but we can frame it for them in religious terms: “We belong to God and we return to God.” It helps me to think of it this way: “From Love we come, and to Love we return.”

### **Lent**

**Lent**, the forty-day season (not including Sundays) in which we prepare for Easter, is a time to come closer to God. The church’s color is purple, historically the most expensive dye, because we are waiting for our king. Alternatively, some churches use “Lenten array,” rough fabric in a drab color for this penitential season. Many people still mark the season by fasting—giving something up—be it chocolate, Facebook, or video games. When I was growing up, we had meatless Mondays in Lent, but I know a family now who are vegetarian for the full six weeks. My husband has often fasted from judgment in Lent by giving a dollar to everyone who asks, and looking them in the eye as he does so, which is not a common practice in New York City.

We give up something in Lent to make more room for God. You could read the Bible each night before bed, or even

## FAITH AT HOME

one night each week, or choose a book with spiritual resonance for a family read-aloud: *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis or *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle. Try taking on a new prayer practice, such as writing to God. Author Rachel Hackenburg's *Writing to God* comes in two editions, one for adults and one for kids. If that seems like too much, find a box big enough for holding blank index cards. Everyone can write or draw prayers and concerns, hopes and sorrows. Putting them into the box is a way of turning them over to God. Try praying at a particular time of day, like Compline at bedtime.

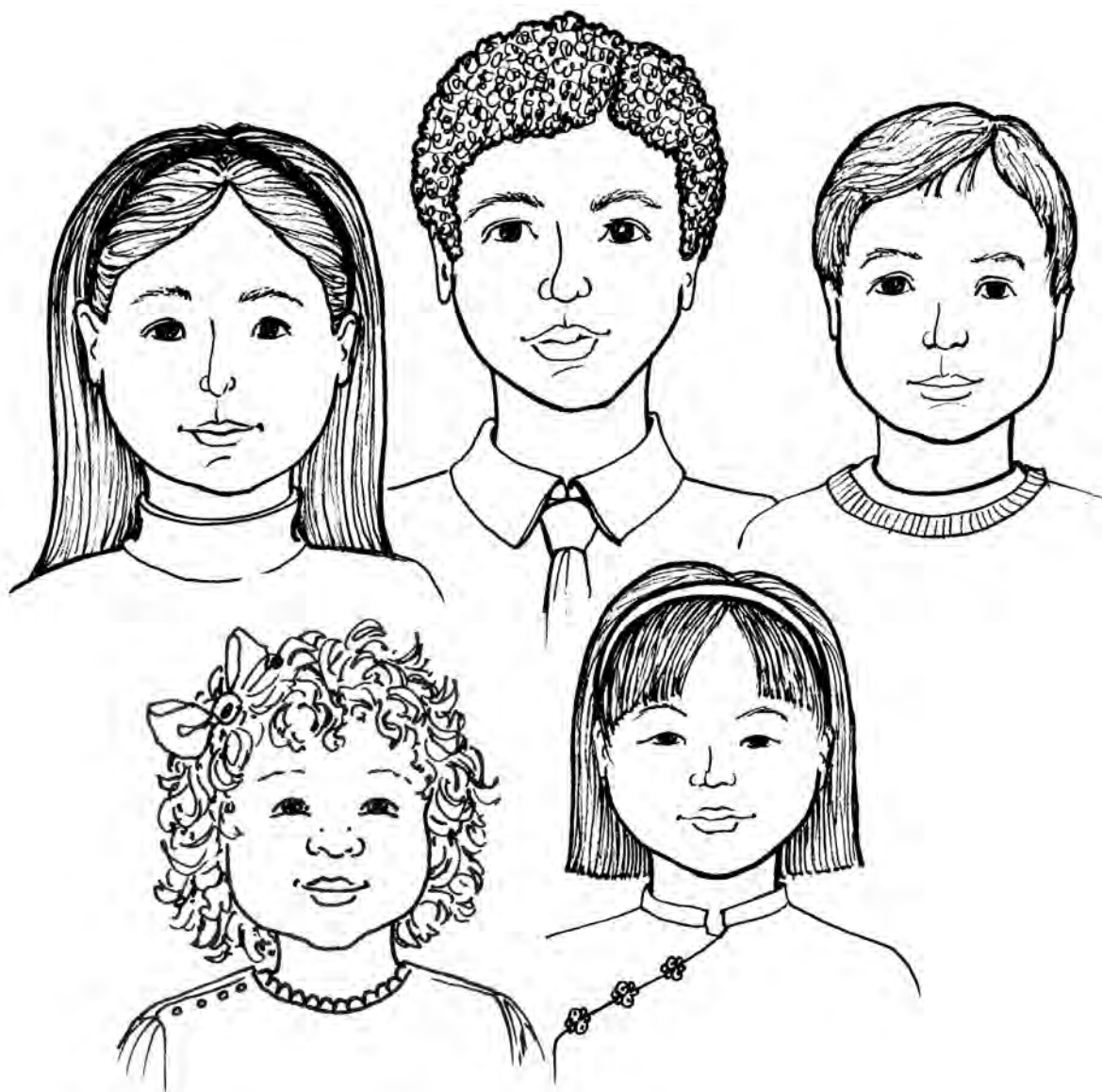
Another important Lenten practice is giving to others. Jenifer Gamber has a downloadable Lenten calendar on her website <http://myfaithmylife.org> for "returning God's blessings out into the world" by encouraging families to be mindful of their privileges. One day you might be asked to give twenty-five cents for every bottle of medicine in your house; another day to add a nickel for every time you turn on the water faucet or flush the toilet! The money can go in the collection plate at church, to a local food bank, or to an international relief organization such as UNICEF or Episcopal Relief and Development.

What else can you do? Spend time outdoors. Lent means lengthen—the days are getting longer. Turn off the screens and take walks after dinner. Spend some time each Saturday picking up trash at the park or helping an older neighbor in the yard. Find something that makes sense for your family and try it. It's okay to slip or skip. Try again. God doesn't mind.



# Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent. On this day we mark our foreheads with ashes. This reminds us that God created human beings out of the dust of the earth and that one day we will return to dust.



Mark a cross on each person's forehead.

"Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." (Book of Common Prayer p.265)

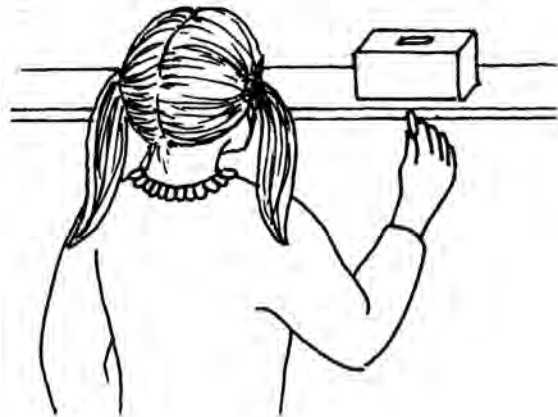
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# Keeping a Holy Lent

To \_\_\_\_\_ means to turn around. During \_\_\_\_\_ we look at our lives to see if we are going in the right direction. We \_\_\_\_\_ to God to help us. We \_\_\_\_\_ the bible to help us know the way. We \_\_\_\_\_ to make us more mindful of what we truly need. We reach out to others who need our \_\_\_\_\_.

Lent      help      fast      repent      pray      study



Repent, for the Kingdom of God had come near. Matthew 3:  
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## Basic Lesson Plan

### Welcome the Group

- Shoes may be removed and lined up along the wall in the hallway. Some children with sensory issues may not wish to remove their shoes, so make shoe removal optional.
- Welcome each child into the room by an adult volunteer or leader.
- Provide nametags if you do not know all the participants. The use of names is so important. It also helps children to learn one another's names.
- Give a bowl/bucket, building mat, and a few figures to each child.
- Invite each child to fill his/her bowl/bucket with LEGO® bricks and encourage each to create freely while others arrive.
- Give a 2-minute notice before the focused group time begins.

**Note:** To avoid mix-ups with bowls, use a dry erase marker to label each bowl/bucket with the group member's name. After trying a number of different styles and shapes, the large, square popcorn buckets available at dollar stores seem to work the best.

### Lay the Foundation

- Each lesson provides background information for both the leader and the group. Details about that lesson's story include authorship, placement in scripture, main characters, and modern day parallels.

### Did You Know?

- This section offers additional background information to spark interest and provide a wider base of knowledge and context before sharing the story. As necessary, tailor the information to the particular age.

### Pray

- Light the Christ candle and pocket the matches.
- Invite each person voluntarily into some form of prayer:
  - Write or draw prayers on brightly colored paper rectangles to build a brick prayer wall session by session.
  - Write or draw prayers on Etch-a-Sketches®.
  - Write or draw prayers on white boards.
  - Toss a LEGO® brick into a central bucket for each prayer offered during the circle gathering. These prayers can be guided or spontaneous.
  - Write prayers using magnetic letters placed on metal sheeting or baking trays.
  - Offer popcorn prayers: Children pop up to offer a short prayer when so moved.
  - Offer Post-It® prayers: Colorful self-adhesive notes can be stuck to the wall to build an ongoing prayer corner.

## Share the Story

- Introduce the story by answering some or all of the following questions, as appropriate. Each lesson includes brief answers to most or all of these questions; you are always free to supplement this information from your own knowledge and research:
  - Where is this story found in the Bible?
  - What other stories can be found before and after this story?
  - Who wrote this story?
  - When did this story take place?
  - When was the story written?
  - Whom are we going to “meet” in this story?
  - Where did this story take place?
  - Where is this location in today’s world?
- Share the story by reading or retelling it.
- Show different images of the story to help spark imagination (art books, original LEGO® constructions, online image sites, etc.).

## Respond to the Story

### Ask Building Questions

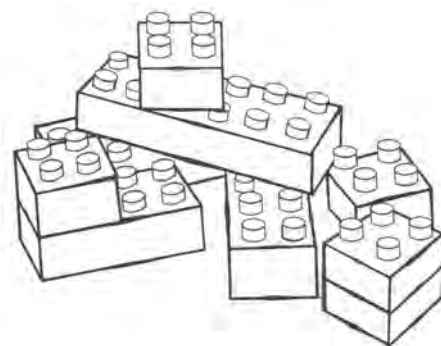
- Allow time for *Building Questions*, comments, and insights. We provide a robust list of questions for each lesson. This time of “wondering” typically serves as the most sacred part of the gathering; try not to rush through the reflections. At this point the interior life of the group often emerges in remarkable ways. This is where the bulk of the theological reflection can be heard and witnessed.
- The list of *Building Questions* is intentionally longer than needed for any given session so that the

lessons can be repeated with the same group over time. This also allows for the leader to pick and choose which question fits best within the context.

- Set the expectation that something from the story must be constructed before any other creations can be made.
- Be available to answer questions, review the story, or help “stuck” children.

### Suggest Blueprints

- *Building Faith Brick by Brick* is intended to be an open-ended theological reflection using LEGO® bricks. The need to specifically script a response should be avoided. However, if a child is having a difficult time focusing in on a response to the story, a few suggested idea starters have been offered, called *Blueprints*. The suggestions should only be introduced as needed. Reading *Blueprints* to the whole group could hinder the creative process, so keep them for “as needed” moments.
- Allow the suggested *Blueprints* to be simple words or concepts to spark ideas within the imagination of the child.





# The Temptation of Jesus

Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13

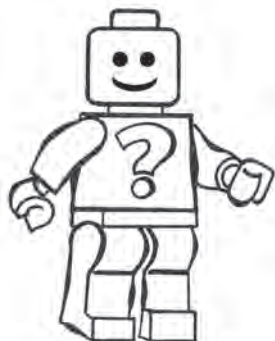
## Welcome the Group

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### Lay the Foundation

- Where is this story found in the Bible?  
**New Testament**
- What is its place in the Bible story?  
**after the baptism of Jesus; before Jesus began his ministry in Galilee**
- Who is the author?  
**Matthew, Mark, and Luke each have their own account**
- Who are the main characters?  
**Jesus, Satan, angels and God**
- Where in the biblical world did it happen?  
**Judean Desert**
- Where is this in today's world?  
**West Bank, Israel**

Find the full description of *Lay the Foundation* on page 15.



### Did You Know?

- ✓ Jesus was out in the desert for 40 days.
- ✓ The number 40 is often associated with testing and the fulfillment of promises.

## Pray

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*Dear God, sometimes we are tempted to do wrong things. Help us look to Jesus as the model of how to keep our eyes on you. Amen.*

Suggested prayer methods are outlined on page 15.

## Share the Story

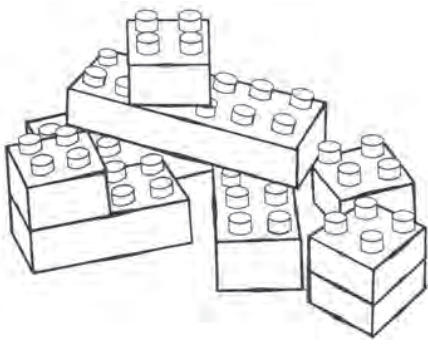
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Suggestions for storytelling are detailed on page 16.

## Respond to the Story

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Invite each member of the group to use bricks and figures to respond to the story. This can be done individually or in small groups. Suggestions for how to support this form of theological reflection can be found on page 16.



## New Testament

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### Ask Building Questions

- I wonder if you have ever been to a desert?
- I wonder when you feel tempted?
- I wonder if you have gone for a long time without food?
- I wonder if you know the difference between a *miracle* and *magic*?
- I wonder if you have ever wanted more than what belongs to you?
- I wonder if you have ever experienced something evil?
- I wonder how Jesus felt when Satan was trying to tempt him?
- I wonder how Satan was feeling when Jesus was refusing him?

### Suggest Blueprints *(if needed)*

- Satan
- Jesus
- God
- desert
- stone
- Holy City and temple
- kingdoms of the world
- angels

### Share Responses to the Story

Encourage each group member to share the creations they have made in response to the story. More details about sharing can be found on page 17.

### Share a Snack

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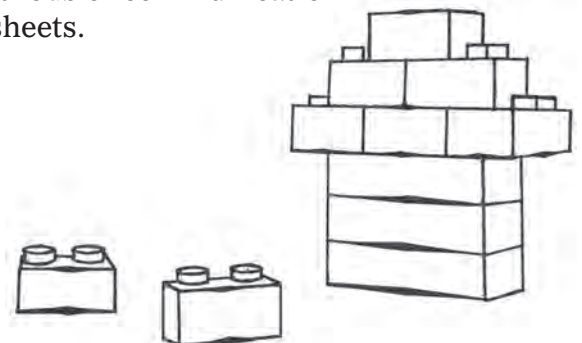
- individual small loaves of bread
- graham-cracker “sand” crumbles over ice cream or pudding

### Continue the Story

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One way to deepen the learning experience and create a link between group learning and faith formation in the home is to have builders show their creations to the adults who pick them up after class.

For additional study and conversation at home, consider different ways to share the Bible verses as well as some of the *Building Questions*. Possible methods of communication are texts, social media, e-blasts, website posts, or take-home sheets.



## CRAFTS

### Easter Garden

Invite participants to prepare for Easter by constructing an Easter Garden, a small model of the garden where Jesus was laid to rest. The Easter Garden, constructed around an “empty tomb,” can be set up on a table or floor. Possible locations for Easter Garden displays in your church are chapel altars, unused doorways, tables inside the sanctuary, baptismal fonts, and outdoor locations. At home that can be used as a centerpiece for where everyone gathers for meals or family time.

#### *Materials*

- 28" x 40" sheet of poster board
- balloons
- masking tape
- newspaper
- wallpaper or papier-mâché paste
- construction paper, assorted colors
- tissue paper, assorted colors





- scissors
- glue
- paint: spray, acrylic, tempera, or latex house paint
- brush
- shellac or varnish

### *Directions*

1. These are for constructing an “empty tomb” from papier-mâché, but alternative construction methods include piling up stones or covering a wooden frame with crinkled grey or brown paper.
2. To construct papier-mâché tomb, blow up enough balloons to form a mound on the poster board 18"–24" high at its peak. Tape the balloons to the poster board and to each other.
3. Tear newspaper into 1" wide strips. Soak the strips in the paste and squeeze out the excess paste. Apply at least three layers of these papier-mâché strips over the balloon mound, overlapping the strips and smoothing each layer down.
4. The mound will need to dry for three days. Make a door for the tomb by cutting many circles from newspaper, soaking the circles in paste, and layering the circles together.
5. Invite participants to make flowers from tissue paper (see p. 37). Save these flowers to use as decorations for the Easter Garden on Holy Saturday.
6. When the papier-mâché is dry, finish the Easter Garden by cutting a hole for the door, popping any remaining balloons, and removing the balloon scraps. Cover the opening with the door you have made. Paint with spray, acrylic, tempera, or latex house paint. When dry, apply a coat of shellac or varnish. Store the garden until Holy Saturday.
7. Sometime during Holy Saturday, set up the finished “empty tomb” on a green mat or florist’s grass. Surround the finished “empty tomb” with flowers and plants. You may add an angel

figure from a nativity set at the door of the tomb and place strips of white cloth inside the tomb.

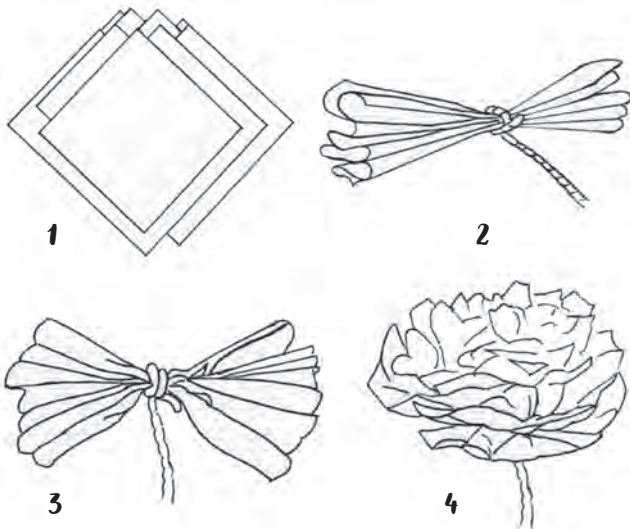
## Easter Flowers

### *Materials*

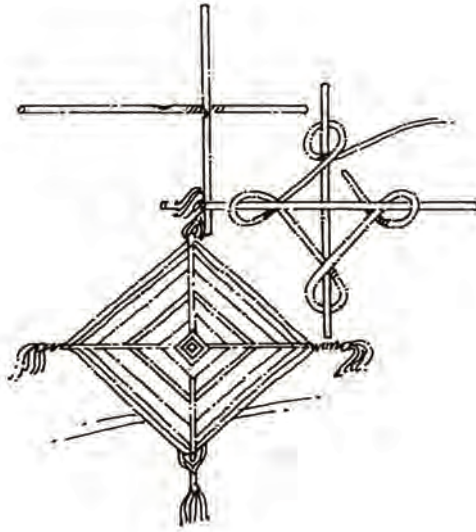
- tissue paper in various colors
- scissors
- green pipe cleaners

### *Directions*

1. Stack two sheets of tissue paper (different colors) together and cut in half, making four squares of equal size. (Vary the size of the squares for smaller or larger flowers, if desired.) Stack all four squares together and fold back and forth multiple times into an accordion fold.
2. Fold in half and twist a pipe cleaner tightly at the center to secure the folds. The pipe cleaner should be tight enough to create gathers at the center. Carefully separate the layers of the tissue paper and pull them up, one at a time, creating the layers of the flower.







## Ojos De Dios (Eyes of God)

A God's Eye is a yarn weaving and spiritual object from an ancient contemplative and spiritual practice of many indigenous peoples in the southwestern United States and the Huichol Indians of north-west Mexico. In many of the pueblos of New Mexico, *Ojos de Dios* were created for celebration or blessing, presented as a gift to bless a home. Traditional *Ojos de Dios* were woven in solitude as part of a time of meditation and prayer. The God's Eye is symbolic of the power of seeing and understanding what is unknown and unknowable. We can think of it as the mystery of God. Once you catch on to the rhythm and pattern of making this simple craft, it can be very contemplative when done in silence.

### *Materials*

- sticks or dowels
- yarn in various colors
- glue
- scissors
- markers

### *Directions*

1. Begin by gathering together for a walk to gather sticks. If weather and location make this unfeasible, gather the sticks yourself before the session, looking for a variety of lengths and thicknesses. Or you may choose to use dowels, purchased in advance from a craft or hardware store.
2. Pick two sticks to use in making a cross. Form a cross with the sticks and glue them at the intersection. Now cut a length of yarn. Tie the yarn to one stick at the point where the two sticks cross. Weave the yarn over and under the sticks in a circle around the point where the two sticks cross.
3. Continue weaving in a circle around the cross point. Use several colors to make a design that pleases you. The wrapping may continue to the outer ends of the sticks or may stop several inches in from the ends. If it stops in from the ends, wrap the exposed sticks with yarn or color the ends of the sticks with a felt marker matching the yarn that was last wrapped.
4. Participants may wish to carry the crosses in procession at church or to take them home.

## LENTEN RECIPE

### **Lenten Pretzels**

The pretzel has been used during Lent for over 1,500 years. It is thought that originally pretzels were made by monks to resemble arms crossed in prayer. These breads were called “little arms.” This can have deep spiritual meaning for us during Lent. Since basically only flour and water are used, pretzels can remind us of fasting.

#### *Ingredients*

- 2 packages dry yeast
- 1½ cups warm water
- 4–5 cups flour
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- coarse salt

#### *Other materials*

- measuring cup
- bowl
- mixing spoon
- 8- to 10-quart pot
- slotted spoon
- cookie sheet
- oven

#### *Directions*

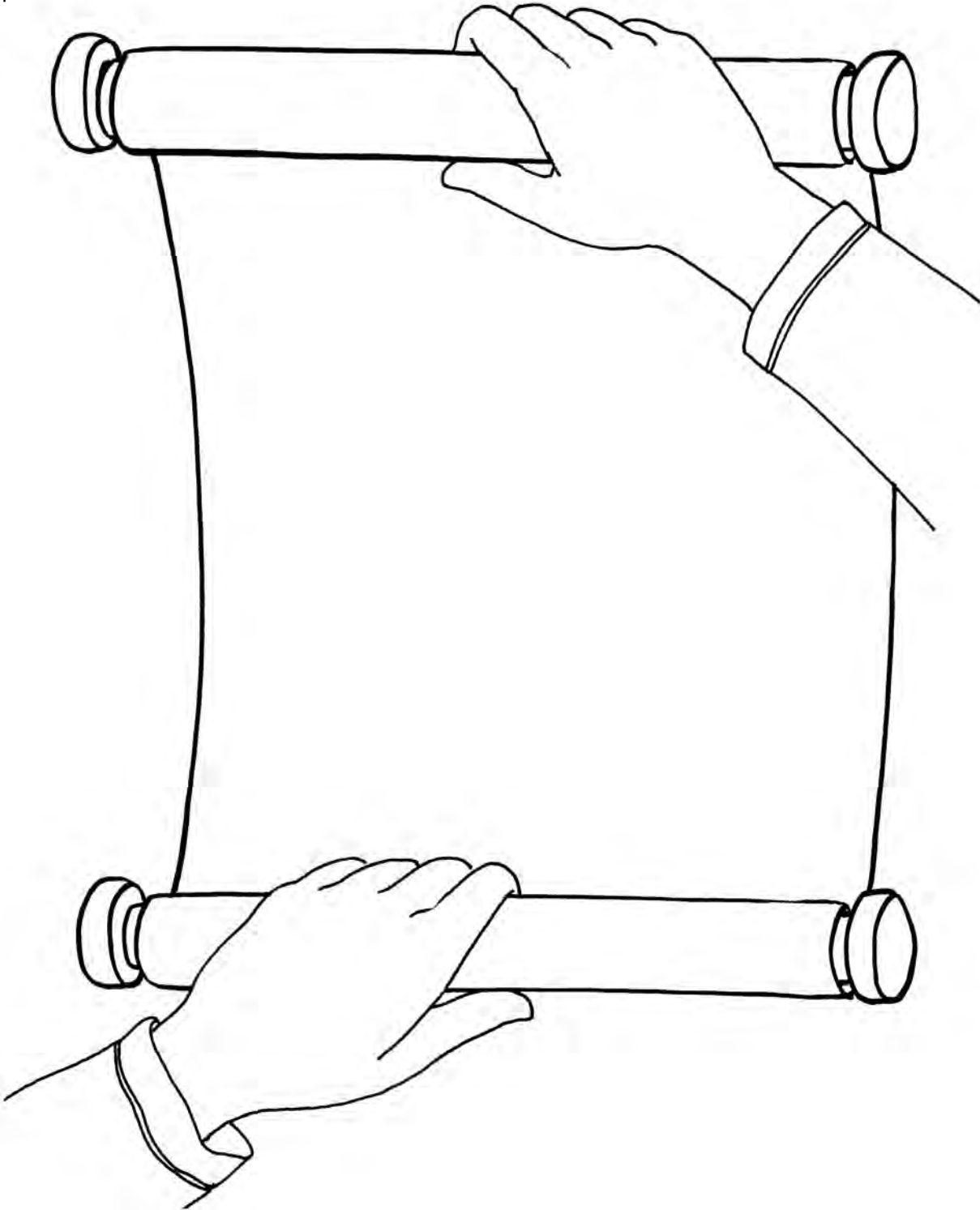
1. Soak the yeast in ¼ cup warm water for five minutes. Add the remaining water and beat in 4 cups of the flour, sugar, and salt. Add as much of the remaining flour as necessary to make a dough that is firm enough to be kneaded, but is still soft.

2. Knead the dough for 10 minutes. Let rise in a warm spot for 45 minutes. Punch down the dough. Divide the dough into 24 small pieces. Roll each piece into a rope. Twist each rope into a pretzel shape.
3. Bring 6–8 quarts of water to a boil. Drop in the pretzels, no more than two at a time. The pretzels will first sink and then rise to the top of the pot. When a pretzel rises, flip it over and boil it 15 seconds on the second side. Then remove the pretzel with a slotted spoon and place the pretzel on a cookie sheet. Continue for the other pretzels.
4. Sprinkle the boiled pretzels with coarse salt. Bake at 425° for 12–15 minutes. Eat while still warm.



# Prayers of Intercession

Lent is a time to practice prayer. Draw or write a prayer asking God to help others.

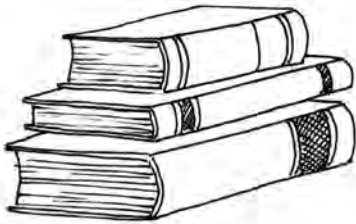


Answer me when I call, O God, defender of my cause. Psalm 4:1

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# Count Your Blessings

Walk through your house and count how many of each of the pictured items you have.



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_

Which of these could you share with someone who has less?

For I was hungry, and you gave me food. Matthew 25:35  
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# HOLY WEEK

## Introduction

During Holy Week the church dramatizes the events leading up to and including the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross. Holy Week begins with the Sunday of the Passion, or Palm Sunday, and the joyous triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and ends with the Triduum (*Triduum Sacrum*, meaning in Latin “the sacred three days”), which begins with the celebration of the Eucharist on Maundy Thursday and ends with the vespers of Easter Sunday evening.

Each day of Holy Week is considered a “red letter” feast day, and many churches offer special services each noonday or evening to commemorate this last day of Jesus’s life. Thursday and Friday of Holy Week are especially significant. The name Maundy Thursday comes from the Latin *mandatum* or “commandment,” from the words attributed to Jesus in the Gospel of John: “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another” (John 13:34). Good Friday commemorates the crucifixion of our Lord. It is known as “Good” because of the new life brought about by Christ’s victory of the cross. Holy Saturday is a time for reflecting upon Jesus’s death and burial and what it means for our lives. It is the calm after the storm as we await the sunrise.



## Love and Sacrifice

The principal theme of Holy Week is Jesus's passion: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13). Jesus gives his life to save us from sin and death.

The language of sacrifice is difficult to understand. The New Testament draws heavily on the sacrificial practices of the temple in describing the unique role of Jesus in bringing salvation through the cross. Pascal lambs were sacrificed at Passover, and Jesus's death on the cross was seen in the light of that temple practice.

During Holy Week it is also important to see the cross from the perspective of the love that God has for us. Jesus's death on the cross shows us how much God loves us, for in the words of Paul, "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor death, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38–39). It is because we share in Christ's victory over sin and death that we face the cross with feelings of sadness and remorse, but also with deep thankfulness for what we have been given. Good Friday is about triumph.

## Holy Week with Children

Talking about death and grief with children is critical to their faith, however, and even though it is Holy Week and not yet Easter it is necessary to give the proclamation, "Christ has died and Christ is risen from the dead" to small children. This is the time to instill in them through prayer and practice the importance of Holy Week in their faith. For example, you might want to do a "foot washing" at home in a special way after sharing the story of Jesus and the Last Supper. You might attend a Good Friday service as a family. Talk about how sad the disciples and Mary the Mother of Jesus must have been to see Jesus die, but there was a promise Jesus needed to complete. Attend an Easter Vigil service and remind them of the story of our salvation, from Old Testament times to the present. Act out the Good Friday/Easter story the same way children often reenact the Christmas story.



# A Dinner in the Upper Room

Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-20

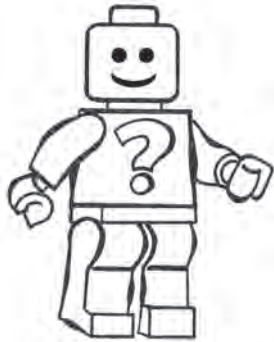
## Welcome the Group

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### Lay the Foundation

- Where is this story found in the Bible?  
**New Testament**
- What is its place in the Bible story?  
**after Judas betrayed Jesus; before Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane**
- Who is the author?  
**Matthew, Mark, and Luke**
- Who are the main characters?  
**Jesus, disciples, and God**
- Where in the biblical world did it happen?  
**Jerusalem**
- Where is this in today's world?  
**Jerusalem**

Find the full description of *Lay the Foundation* on page 15.



### Did You Know?

- ✓ The term *Passover* comes from God “passing over” the Israelite homes with marked doorposts as told in the Book of Exodus. The blood on the doorposts was a sign to keep them safe from the angel of death while they were still in Egypt.
- ✓ The Feast of Unleavened Bread is another name for Passover.
- ✓ Jesus was in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover with his disciples.

## Pray

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*Dear God, help us to remember you when we gather together. Let bread and wine be two of the many ways you show your love. Let us walk with you as your beloved children. Amen.*

Suggested prayer methods are outlined on page 15.

## Share the Story

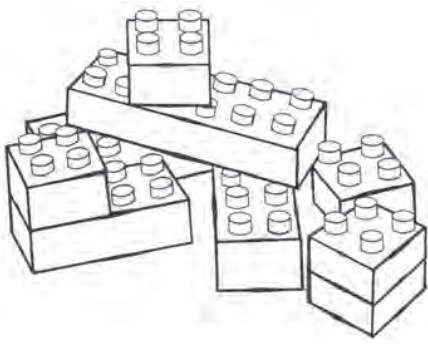
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Suggestions for storytelling are detailed on page 16.

## Respond to the Story

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Invite each member of the group to use bricks and figures to respond to the story. This can be done individually or in small groups. Suggestions for how to support this form of theological reflection can be found on page 16.



## Ask Building Questions

- I wonder who gathers together with you for special meals?
- I wonder what your family does to remember the stories of God?
- I wonder what your family does to remember special family stories from the past?
- I wonder what food is served at your family gatherings?
- I wonder if a friend has ever hurt you or done mean things to you?
- I wonder what it would be like to have dinner with Jesus?
- I wonder if any words for this story sound familiar?
- I wonder if this story reminds you of something we do together in church?
- I wonder what you think happens to the bread and wine when the priest blesses them?

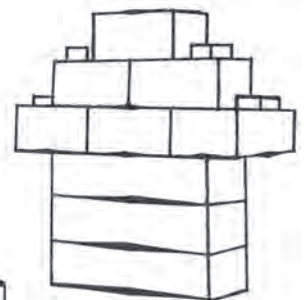
## Suggest Blueprints (if needed)

- |                 |                            |
|-----------------|----------------------------|
| ○ Jesus         | ○ bread                    |
| ○ disciples     | ○ wine                     |
| ○ upper room    | ○ images of Holy Communion |
| ○ Passover lamb | ○ God                      |

## Continue the Story

One way to deepen the learning experience and create a link between group learning and faith formation in the home is to have builders show their creations to the adults who pick them up after class.

For additional study and conversation at home, consider different ways to share the Bible verses as well as some of the *Building Questions*. Possible methods of communication are texts, social media, e-blasts, website posts, or take-home sheets.

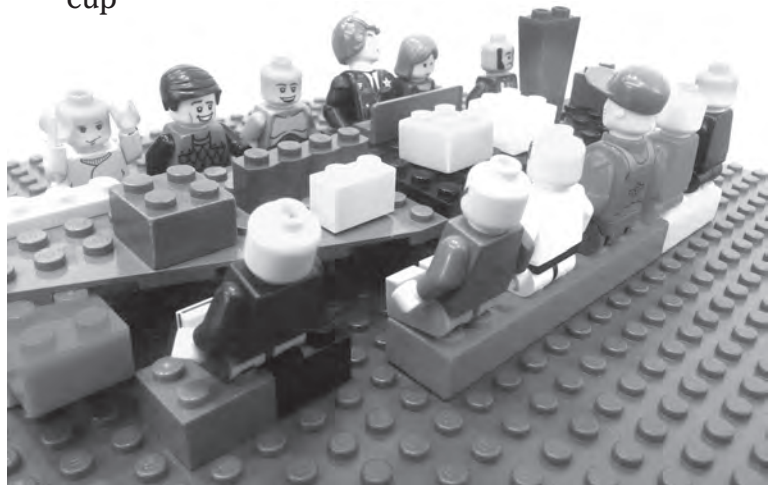


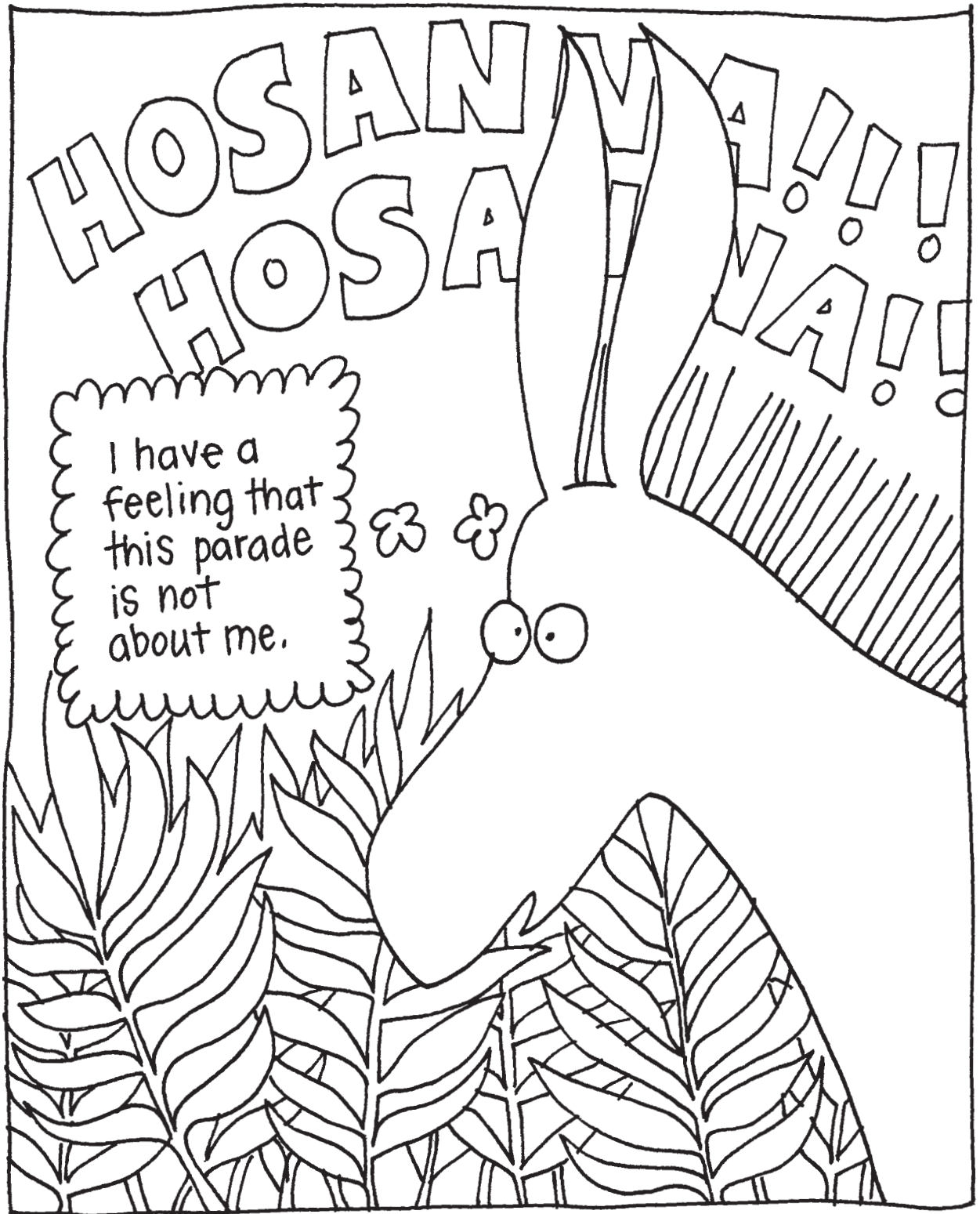
## Share Responses to the Story

Encourage each group member to share the creations they have made in response to the story. More details about sharing can be found on page 17.

## Share a Snack

- lamb or other meat
- pita bread, matzo, tortillas, or other unleavened bread
- traditional foods served for Passover: hard boiled eggs, herbs dipped in salt water, red grape juice, apple-nut paste (*charoset*), lettuce, and horseradish
- bread and wine from common plate and cup





# Palm Sunday

## Liturgy of the Palms

Mark 11:1-11

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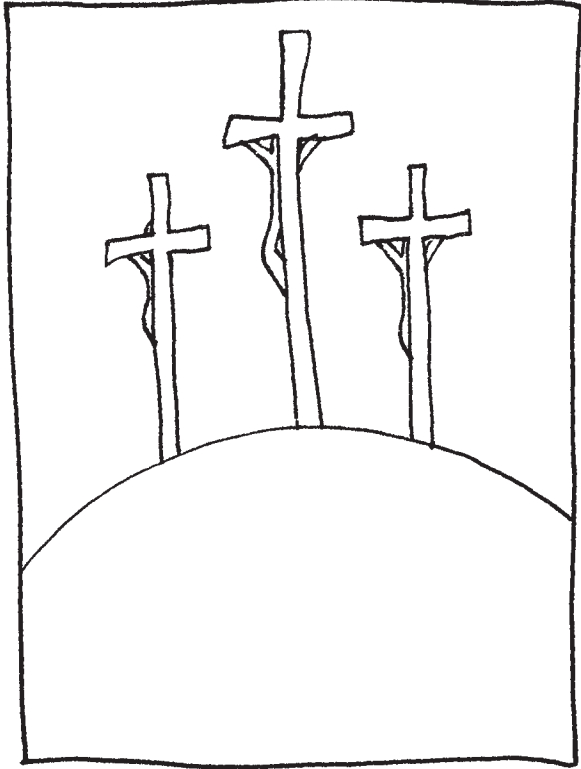
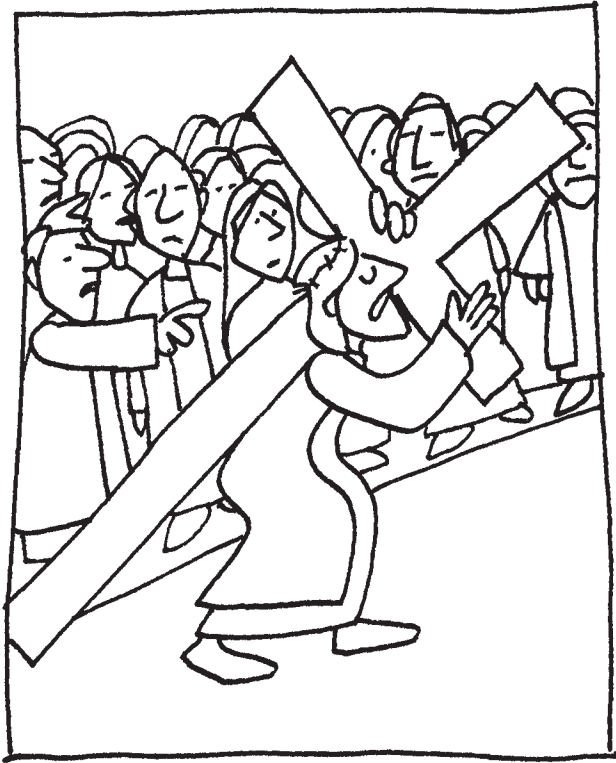
*or* John 12:12-16

### Notes on These Readings

We begin Holy Week each year with a great parade, a procession of palms that recalls Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Each gospel tells the story, which tells us we need to pay attention to it. Jesus comes into town with spontaneous and raucous acclaim. Clearly the crowd imagined him to be some kind of leader, or liberator, or savior. They will soon change their mind, but for now, they shout "Hosanna," which is something like an ancient near-eastern version of "Hooray."

### Questions

1. What does it mean to you that Jesus is king?
2. If you were in that crowd, do you think you'd be shouting "Hosanna"?
3. If Jesus came to your town, how do you think he'd be received?
4. What kind of king do you think Jesus represented for the people of Jerusalem? Do you think of him as a king now? Is kingdom language meaningful in our day? Is there other language that might be more helpful?
5. Why do you think the mood of the crowd shifted so quickly? We're only a few days away from Good Friday, after all.





# Palm Sunday

## Passion Narrative

Mark 14:1–15:47

### Notes on This Reading

It's been said that the gospels are really Passion Narratives with long introductions, which is to say that the gospels are not biographies. They do not cover every detail of Jesus's life. Rather they focus on the last week of Jesus's life. All that has come before (the stories of his birth, the miracles, his teaching) simply sets the stage for an exploration of the meaning of Jesus's death and resurrection. With that in mind, on Palm Sunday we read long passages of the gospel, telling the story of Jesus's last hours. In many churches, in keeping with ancient tradition, the reading is offered in parts, as a drama. That is not only to keep the interest of the congregation with a rather long passage. It is also to say that this drama is actually something in which we all participate. Take this Sunday as an opportunity to enter into the story, and to think about where you fit in.

### Questions

1. What do you think of the idea that the gospels are really focused on the last week of Jesus's life, that the story of his birth and the teaching and the miracles are all prologue?
2. Where do you see yourself in the Passion Narrative? Which character do you identify with? Which characters seem to engage in inexplicable behavior?
3. Each gospel tells the story a bit differently. What do you make of the way Jesus is described in his hours on the cross? What does the gospel writer want us to know about him in his darkest hour?
4. How does the reading of this long passage help to prepare you for a journey through Holy Week? What are your hopes for this distinctive week?





# Holy Saturday

## Matthew 27:57–66

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*or* John 19:38–42

### Notes on These Readings

For this holy day—a day of rest and quiet—we are offered two different passages from the gospels, one from Matthew and one from John. Both describe the hours after Jesus's death, as he is taken down from the cross. Both describe the loving and attentive ministry of Joseph of Arimathea. In the case of John's gospel, Nicodemus also appears. Remember, we met him earlier this year, in Lent, when he came to meet Jesus at night. We'll read about him again on Trinity Sunday, later this spring. Take this day as a day of quiet remembrance. Let words be few.

### Questions

1. What do you think motivated Joseph of Arimathea to go public in his attentiveness to Jesus? Do you think that took courage? What was he risking?
2. How about Nicodemus? Look up the other two times he is mentioned in John's gospel (chapter 3 and chapter 7) and think about the ways that his faith as a disciple has grown over the course of the story.
3. How will you observe this particular feast day in the church? What will you do to carve out some silence?

...YOU ARE LOOKING FOR  
JESUS OF NAZARETH, WHO WAS  
CRUCIFIED. HE HAS BEEN RAISED.  
HE IS NOT HERE...



# Easter Vigil

## Mark 16:1–8

### Notes on This Reading

The Easter Vigil offers one of the greatest liturgies of the church year. It has a bit of everything. It begins in darkness, with readings that recall God's saving acts in history, with special focus on the story of the Exodus and the affirmation that Easter is indeed a new kind of Passover. In many ways, the Vigil reverses the path of the Palm Sunday narrative, which moves from the great celebration of Jesus's entry to Jerusalem to the tragedy of the cross. In contrast, the Easter Vigil moves from darkness to light, with the first declaration of alleluias and the first eucharist of the Easter season.

### Questions

1. How is Easter a movement from darkness to light?
2. How does the story of Jesus's resurrection seem similar to the story of the Passover and the Exodus?
3. As you read the passage from Mark, how do you imagine the women who first saw Jesus felt?
4. Have you ever attended a sunrise service? Why do you think we convene those gatherings on Easter?



# The Resurrection

Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-12;  
Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-10

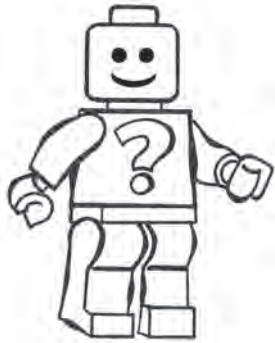
## Welcome the Group

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### Lay the Foundation

- Where is this story found in the Bible?  
**New Testament**
- What is its place in the Bible story?  
**after Jesus' crucifixion and burial; before Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene**
- Who is the author?  
**Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John**
- Who are the main characters?  
**Jesus, Mary Magdalene, other female followers, some of the disciples, and God**
- Where in the biblical world did it happen?  
**Jerusalem**
- Where is this in today's world?  
**Jerusalem**

Find the full description of *Lay the Foundation* on page 15.



### Did You Know?

- ✓ The resurrection is the story of how Jesus returned to live after being dead in the tomb for three days.
- ✓ Each account by the gospel writers name different people as being present at the tomb. They also all describe the angel(s) who shared the news of Jesus' resurrection differently.
- ✓ John is the only gospel writer who does not mention an angel at the tomb.
- ✓ The resurrection is the part of the Jesus story we hear about on Easter Sunday.
- ✓ Islam considers Jesus a prophet.
- ✓ Jesus' tomb was actually similar to a small cave.

## Pray

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*O God, who gives life to all living things, we thank you for the resurrection of Jesus. Help it be a sign and symbol of your love for us and the whole world. Show us how to look for new life each and every day. Amen.*

Suggested prayer methods are outlined on page 15.

## Share the Story

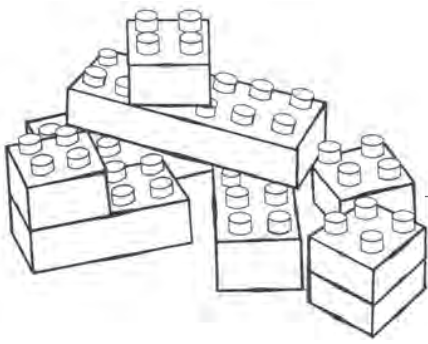
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Suggestions for storytelling are detailed on page 16.

## Respond to the Story

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Invite each member of the group to use bricks and figures to respond to the story. This can be done individually or in small groups. Suggestions for how to support this form of theological reflection can be found on page 16.



## New Testament

### Ask Building Questions

- ☐ I wonder what the friends and followers were doing during the three days Jesus was in the tomb?
- ☐ I wonder what God was doing and thinking during the three days Jesus was in the tomb?
- ☐ I wonder how it felt for Jesus' friends to see the empty tomb?
- ☐ I wonder what angels really look like?
- ☐ I wonder why angels always tell people, "Don't be afraid"?
- ☐ I wonder if you have ever lost a friend?
- ☐ I wonder if you have ever witnessed anything so surprising that you wanted to run away?
- ☐ I wonder what it was like for the women to meet Jesus along the path?
- ☐ I wonder if Jesus has ever come close to you?
- ☐ I wonder what would have happened if Jesus stayed dead?
- ☐ I wonder what it means to you that Jesus was raised from the dead?
- ☐ I wonder what you might be wondering about in this story?
- ☐ I wonder if you have heard this story before?

- ☐ I wonder who was the first person to tell you about Jesus?
- ☐ I wonder whom you want to tell about Jesus?
- ☐ I wonder what Jesus wants to tell you?

### Suggest Blueprints *(if needed)*

- ☐ empty tomb
- ☐ angels
- ☐ Jesus alive
- ☐ God
- ☐ stone, rolled away
- ☐ friends and followers of Jesus

### Share Responses to the Story

Encourage each group member to share the creations they have made in response to the story. More details about sharing can be found on page 17.

### Share a Snack

- ☐ tomb buns (Wrap crescent rolls wrapped around a marshmallow; when baked, the center melts away to leave an empty, sweet space.)
- ☐ hummus and pita pocket "empty tombs"
- ☐ easter eggs
- ☐ party food

### Continue the Story

One way to deepen the learning experience and create a link between group learning and faith formation in the home is to have builders show their creations to the adults who pick them up after class.

For additional study and conversation at home, consider different ways to share the Bible verses as well as some of the *Building Questions*. Possible methods of communication are texts, social media, e-blasts, website posts, or take-home sheets.

